

# Can we cure clickbaiting?

 By [Sarah Heuer](#)

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I've given up the fight against 'verb-ing', as you can see. I've accepted that language evolves, is dynamic, and that these are good things.



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It was a long process, from 'purist' to 'progressive', but well worth the introspection and existential struggle.

## However...

Not in this universe, or any other, will I ever be able to surrender to the regressive communication that is so ubiquitous online. I refuse to submit, to write content aimed at the lowest common denominator, the 'man in the street', who, if one examines the evidence of online marketing, appears to be on an intellectual par with Forrest Gump... but with a lower EQ.

## I believe in the power of belief.

In other words, I believe that if you expect people to consume your insultingly simplified and sensationalist content, they will evolve to become the target audience you have stereotyped them as being. If one only eats fast food and drinks soda; one loses the taste for an exquisitely crafted meal and a delicately bouqueted wine.

(There I go with the verb-ing again.)

The world swings to and fro, like a pendulum. I believe the era of clickbait is drawing to a blessed close. And further, I believe that those of us who opt for the high road now - paved with sincere and thoughtful copy - will be ahead of the curve, boasting truly loyal customers and satisfied clients... and not first against the wall, come the revolution.

## Do you really want to be writing content that insults your audience?

And if they aren't insulted by it, do you want them to be your audience in the first place?

In my previous iteration, as an English teacher, I discovered that one can teach a 13-year-old not only to understand, but also to really appreciate and marvel at, a Shakespearean sonnet. Many colleagues were skeptical. Some even scoffed. But it bears repeating: people live up - or down - to your expectations. It's known as the Pygmalion effect (and I won't insult you by explaining where the name comes from).

## Proof!

Many years ago, Professor Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson conducted a study at a school in California. All the students were given an IQ test at the beginning of the study. However, the results of this test were not used. Instead, the teachers were given a list of randomly selected names, and told that these students were the 'gifted' individuals, according to the test.

At the end of the study, all the students were again tested. I'm sure you can guess what happened.

The students who were labelled as 'gifted' performed *far better* in the second test, purely because of the way they had been treated by their teachers.

Rosenthal concluded that something as simple as our attitude or approach can make a huge difference to the way people respond to us. In other words, if teachers tacitly expected exceptional perception from certain students, their expectations were likely to be met.

So... let's make the world a more enlightened place, by writing content we're proud to put our names to, both ethically and linguistically. Without becoming pompous, let's give our audience the benefit of the intellectual doubt.

I look forward to seeing you join the revolution.

## ABOUT SARAH HEUER

Has been in the language and communication business for 15 years. She holds Cum Laude Honours degrees in English Literature and Publishing. She has lectured Journalism, taught English, and written and edited in a variety of sectors, including law, the culinary world, secondary and tertiary education, psychology, the arts, finance and economics, and marketing. In her spare time, she toys with the idea of writing a best-seller. She is currently head editor and copywriter at inSite Innovative Education Solutions.

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